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**Human Rights Council**
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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development**

# Written statement* submitted by Equality Now, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[23 May 2014]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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# End Child Marriage – a Target in the Post-2015 Development Agenda

In anticipation of the Human Rights Council panel discussion on preventing and eliminating child, early and forced marriage on 23 June 2014, we call on all governments to support inclusion of a specific target on the issue in the post-2015 development framework with the aim of ending child marriage as soon as possible.

Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/24/23 ("the resolution") recognized that "the persistence of child, early and forced marriage contributes to impairing the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable and inclusive economic growth and social cohesion, and that therefore the elimination of child, early and force marriage should be considered in the discussion of the post-2015 development agenda." The Open Working Group on Sustainable Development has thus far included the elimination of child marriage, by 2030, in its current working document.

As the resolution also recognized, child marriage, which cuts across countries, cultures, religions and ethnicities, "prevents individuals from living their lives free from all forms of violence." It affects approximately 14 million girls every year and has a profound impact on them throughout their lives and on the community they live in. It violates the rights of girls and women to equality, non-discrimination, health, education, and to live free from violence and exploitation.

A child marriage target within the post-2015 development agenda should include comprehensive national legal framework indicators, in conformity with international law as discussed in Equality Now's report, *Protecting the Girl Child – Using the law to end child, early and forced marriage and related human rights violations*, such as:

- institution of a minimum age of marriage law at 18
- amendment of laws with lower ages of marriage to bring them to 18
- awareness of and implementation of good minimum age of marriage laws
- amendment of laws exempting punishment for rape (and statutory rape), including by disallowing judicial consent to marriage in sexual violence cases
- amendment of discriminatory laws which allow difference in marriage age between men and women
- prohibition of harmful practices associated with child marriage such as female genital mutilation, dowry/bride price, force feeding and trafficking
- requirement and enforcement of birth and marriage registration

In addition, States should undertake a comprehensive review, in conjunction with women's groups, of existing laws to identify and amend any that continue to discriminate against women and girls, as well as those that have a discriminatory impact on women and girls.

Equality Now welcomes the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' report "Preventing and eliminating, child, early and forced marriage," (A/HRC/26/22) as requested by the Human Rights Council, and its recommendation that countries work towards "ensuring a national legal framework in line with international human rights standards, including with regard to age of majority and the legal age of marriage for girls, the prohibition of forced marriage and birth and marriage registration." We also welcome the African Union Commission's new campaign "End Child Marriage" in Africa, which includes the aim of furthering implementation of the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa. This strong regional treaty calls on States to guarantee in their national legislation a minimum age of marriage of 18 for women (article 6(b)).

We hope you will join us in supporting the global effort to end child marriage as soon as possible so girls are protected, their rights are respected, and they and our communities can thrive.